



# Main Street! Matters

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE TEXAS MAIN STREET PROGRAM

JUNE 2013 • COMMUNITY HERITAGE DEVELOPMENT DIVISION • P.O. BOX 12276, AUSTIN, TX 78711 • 512.463.6092

## Spotlight on La Grange

(Population approx. 4,675)

“The whole is greater than the sum of all of its parts”—Aristotle. People working together are routinely able to do more work than if their individual efforts are added together. In 1995, many enthusiastic citizens contributed to writing the Main Street application, making more than 20 presentations to garner support for the program and gathering 170 letters of support. La Grange became an official Texas Main Street city in 1996, and since the early stages, it has been the work of the business owners, government officials, and citizens who have joined together. They formed public-private partnerships that

enhance the downtown experience by organizing new and innovative events, preserving historic buildings, and growing the economy in unique and eclectic ways. By following the Texas Main Street Four-Point Approach™, the La Grange program has been able to develop its goals and formulate work plans to chart its success.

The enthusiasm still remains evident in La Grange today in more than 15 buildings restored and renovated, resulting with more than \$14.3 million of investment on the Square. During this time of investment in downtown, the Fayette County Courthouse was also restored under the Texas Historical Commission’s Historic Courthouse Preservation Program. James Riely Gordon designed this 1891 Romanesque Revival courthouse. Rare among courthouses, this structure originally had an open atrium at



The Fayette County Courthouse in historic downtown La Grange

its center with a large fountain, cast iron sculptures, and tropical plants. This area was enclosed for many years, but was reopened during the restoration. The restoration was completed in 2005. Main Street managers will tour this courthouse during the Texas Main Street training in June. The National Bank and Trust was also part of this significant reinvestment in downtown. They once considered demolishing their buildings, but after discussion with the Main Street Program and the National Park Service, they accomplished a beautiful restoration for which they won a Texas Downtown Association award in 2006 for Best Building Rehabilitation (for cities with fewer than 50,000 population). The bank has since outgrown these buildings and now leases them.



La Grange National Bank and Trust buildings restoration and 2006 Texas Downtown Association award winner



The recently restored Texas Quilt Museum

With their high ceilings, brick walls, and original hardwood floors, the two 1890s buildings that house the Texas Quilt Museum provide a fine showcase for both antique and contemporary quilt art. The museum officially opened in November 2011, and Texas Main Street managers will have a special tour of this gem in June.

The La Grange Main Street Program holds various community events and fundraisers throughout the year for an incentive grant program targeted at building and business owners to assist them with improvements. These events are committee driven and use the same principles as the inaugural committee. The program works to manage its growth by investing in promotional events that attract both outside visitors as well as members of the local community. The inaugural La Grange Uncorked, La Grange's very own wine and food festival,



Attendees have fun at Schmeckenfest, La Grange's wassail tasting and holiday celebration

occurred this past March as a result of a partnership with the La Grange Area Chamber to give a new spin on their Men Who Cook fundraiser. The event provided attendees with an opportunity to

visit local merchants and taste numerous wines as well as sample delicious cuisine prepared by local men who enjoy cooking. For its first year, the event had a sell-out crowd of more than 400 people and everyone is looking forward to next year.

Another crowd-pleasing event is Schmeckenfest, La Grange's wassail tasting and Christmas celebration. Entering into its 7th year, Schmeckenfest is a true community event, which attracts locals to the square to sample wassail (hot cider) that shop owners make and provide in their shops. Attendees also support local businesses by shopping local and to enjoying local musicians and dancers. Being named Schmeckenmeister is a coveted honor that the businesses vie for, since it is based on which wassail is voted the best by the participants. The event also includes live music, delicious treats sold by local nonprofit organizations; and let's not forget, a visit from Santa.

La Grange is also very proud of its long-time businesses. Nine of these will be honored on Friday, June 7 with Texas Treasures Business Awards from the Texas Historical Commission.

These awards will be presented by Texas Representative Kolkhorst and Mayor Moerbe. This special public event will take place at 12:30 p.m. immediately following the Texas Main Street managers summer training at the Texas Czech Heritage and Cultural Center. All Main Street managers are welcome to stay for the event.

Through lots of hard work and determination, a vision and a plan for managed growth has guided the Main Street program in La Grange for the past 17 years. It will continue to do so well into the future.

*Thanks to Stacey Norris, La Grange Main Street Manager, for providing this article.*

## FOCUS ON MAIN STREET DESIGN...

### The Corner

Intersections and gateways are a frequent concern for many downtowns. It is often hard to tell which direction to go to get downtown. Many times the first view is auto-oriented strip malls, stores, fast food restaurants, or gas stations that have the parking lot in front. For many downtowns this is a crucial intersection. If the visitor is not directed by signage, they may miss the downtown entirely. But sign-



A good example downtown corner grocery in Bembridge, England





(left) Corner gas station in Georgetown, Texas. (right) Infill gas station in Geneva, Switzerland (photo source [www.citykin.com/2011/01/sidewalk-gas-pumps.html](http://www.citykin.com/2011/01/sidewalk-gas-pumps.html))

age alone should not and is not enough. Thinking bigger picture about the urban environment, these corners should signify the dense urban downtown fabric that is to come. Gas stations are a prominent type of business located on the corners of these intersections, and they could look far better than the common scene of gas pumps with a canopy out front and the small store behind. The entire urban downtown scale and environment can easily erode after the gas station. If the building is not built to the sidewalk edge, the pedestrian experience disappears. This does not have to be the case for new infill gas stations. See the photo from Geneva, Switzerland (above, right) where the building is built to the sidewalk edge and the gas

pumps are actually located on the sidewalk. Note how pedestrians, cyclists, and cars are using the area.

Perhaps more applicable to Texas Main Street cities and current safety regulations would be to flip the location of the gas pumps to the rear or side of the building. This can create a safe walking environment while increasing the aesthetic appeal of the corner. The picture of the rendering (below, left) is a good example, where the building is built to the sidewalk edge and the gas pumps are located in the rear. This illustrates how a chain gas station can still fit into the unique downtown context. This approach can act to extend the length of the downtown as new businesses and infill move in and build in the same

manner to the sidewalk edge, increasing the pedestrian friendliness that Main Street encourages.

The picture of the corner gas station in Milwaukee (below, right) is another effective example. What is interesting about both of these examples is that they include offices or apartments above the first floor. Including living or work density in the area, can influence other stores nearby to cater to these residents/workers. The gas station may also be influenced to act more as a corner grocery store, providing more variety and goods than the typical prepackaged foods.

It would be ideal to have more of the small corner grocery store concept in downtown and throughout



(left) Rendering of gas station with pumps behind the building, fitting in with the context of downtown. (right) Neighborhood corner gas station in Milwaukee, Wisconsin (photo source: <http://milwaukeeestimates.blogspot.com/2007/04/urban-gas-station.html>)



Good examples of corner/downtown grocery stores in New Orleans.

a city. Rather than the current national trend of huge auto-centered supermarkets that must be driven to, walking can be encouraged with more traditional neighborhood grocery stores in more locations. This approach may involve ordinance overhauls for some cities, but it is an important step in trying to deconstruct the problem of sprawl. Smaller models of any type of stores in more locations throughout the cities makes different nodes of commercial activity that is more walkable for the residents in that area. For the Main Street district in particular, it can help the downtown to be relevant for locals, not just a marketing tool for visitors. The more the pedestrian experience and walkability is accessible for everyday use, the more the downtown and city will prosper as a whole and become a more vibrant interactive district.

*Thanks to Sarah Blankenship, Project Design Assistant for the Texas Main Street Program, for providing this article.*

## UNDERTOLD MARKERS

There is one month left to submit an Undertold Marker application for 2013. These THC Historical Markers are part of an effort to

address historical gaps and promote a diversity of topics. They can be about individuals, events, communities, structures, or groups and organizations. Applications are due by June 15. Learn more about the program and download an application:

[www.thc.state.tx.us/preserve/projects-and-programs/state-historical-markers/undertold-markers](http://www.thc.state.tx.us/preserve/projects-and-programs/state-historical-markers/undertold-markers)

## MAIN STREET AROUND THE STATE

### Bastrop and Georgetown

Congratulations to Bastrop and Georgetown on securing top spots in SmallTownSouth's "Ten Wonderful Small Town Central Business Districts in the South". See

[www.sbt-d.com/Features/TopTenSmallTowns/tabid/564/Default.aspx](http://www.sbt-d.com/Features/TopTenSmallTowns/tabid/564/Default.aspx)

### Clifton

Clifton's new Boots 'n Brew beer-tasting event on April 27 was an enormous success, selling 325 of 350 tickets this first year. Many of these tickets were sold to visitors residing hours away from Clifton. Businesses reported record sales for an event night. Numerous community partnerships were developed,

expanding the volunteer base for future events.

## Huntsville

State Senator Charles Schwertner and Representative John Otto recognized Gibbs Brothers and Co. with a Texas Treasures Business Award from the Texas Historical Commission in April. General Sam Houston was a regular customer of Gibbs Brothers &

Co., established in 1841 in the Republic of Texas and family owned and operated since its beginning. The business has been located in the same location on the Huntsville downtown square since its founding.



Gibbs Brothers and Co., est. 1841, in Huntsville was presented the Texas Treasures Business Award

## EVENTS

If you would like one of your Main Street events posted here, email [jill.robinson@thc.state.tx.us](mailto:jill.robinson@thc.state.tx.us) at least three weeks ahead of the month in which you want the posting.

### May 4 – July 27

The Huntsville downtown farmers market will be held from 8 a.m. – noon every Saturday. Call 936.291.5920 or see [www.huntsvilledowntownfarmersmarket.weebly.com](http://www.huntsvilledowntownfarmersmarket.weebly.com)



**May 31–June 1, Denton**

This year, dogs and their best in the evening shade at the Dog Days of Denton Celebration “yappy” hour on Friday, and again on Saturday morning and afternoon. Festivities take place in the north end of Quakertown Park at 321 E.

McKinney, just a few blocks northeast of the Denton County historic courthouse square. The Dog Days of Denton will celebrate its 20th anniversary this year. Attendees can enjoy a canine couture fashion show, live entertainment, demos and performances by canines and their trainers, glamfur photos, canine contests, dancing with dog demos, spokesdog pageant, arts and craft vendors, pet care information, pet rescue groups, and festival foods. There will be a cool zone by Invisible Fence of Greater Dallas—expanded for more comfort this year. See **June 22, Farmersville** The 14th annual Audie Murphy Day celebration honoring Audie Murphy and local veterans will be held in historic downtown. Events

will include a military flyover and parade at 10 a.m. and a ceremony honoring local veterans at 10:45 a.m. at the historic Onion Shed. A reception for veterans will be held at noon at the United Methodist Church. See

[www.farmersvilletx.com/main\\_street\\_2/audie\\_murphy\\_day/index.jsp](http://www.farmersvilletx.com/main_street_2/audie_murphy_day/index.jsp)

**AWARD NOMINATIONS****Texas Downtown Association (TDA) President’s Awards**

The 2013 TDA President’s Awards recognize and honor the people and projects that have achieved excellence in Texas downtowns.

Award categories include: design (best commercial interior, best renovation/rehabilitation, best restoration, best new construction, best public improvement), achievement (best marketing program, best promotional event, best downtown business, best downtown partner), Downtowner of the Year, and the Susan H. Campbell Award for Professional Excellence. Nominations

must be postmarked by July 19. For the awards guidelines and application, see

[www.texasdowntown.org/president-s-awards.html](http://www.texasdowntown.org/president-s-awards.html).

**CONFERENCES****Reclaiming Vacant Properties Conference**

The Center for Community Progress will hold its fifth national Reclaiming Vacant Properties conference in Philadelphia Sept. 9–11.

The conference theme is Investing in the Future: Unlocking Hidden Values. Sessions and speakers will pay particular attention to the ways in which the nation’s communities are recognizing and capitalizing on the value from their vacant and distressed properties in order to reduce costs, increase revenues, return equity to individuals, and create a stable foundation for future prosperity. See

<http://www.communityprogress.net/events-pages-32.php?id=345>

**WHAT DID TEXAS MAIN STREET CITIES DO FOR PRESERVATION MONTH?**

There were history and preservation focused events in Texas Main Street cities during the month of May—National Preservation Month. Many cities issued Preservation Month proclamations. Just a few of the many other successful events included:

**Amarillo**

Held a dedication of the historic Fisk Building (Courtyard by Marriott) for the National Register of Historic Places.

**Brenham**

On May 2, they held a Local History Day with 330 4<sup>th</sup> graders. The children learned of the history of the area, played games of the past, and learned songs from the Civil War period. The event was held in seven locations with costumed characters, took six weeks to prepare and the program logged 439 volunteer hours. They have plans to add 7<sup>th</sup> graders next year. The event was so successful that other community groups and museums want to be involved next year.

**Ferris**

Ferris Main Street collaborated with the Ferris High School art department to conduct a graphics arts contest. The winner doubled as the annual Brick Festival’s publicity posters.

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## **WHAT DID TEXAS MAIN STREET CITIES DO FOR PRESERVATION MONTH?**

### **Huntsville**

The annual “Airing of the Quilts” kicked off the month, historic walking tours were offered on Thursdays, a display case was created in City Hall with before/after pictures and history of downtown, and Then and Now photos and articles were submitted to the newspaper and posted on Facebook highlighting areas of historic significance in downtown.

### **La Grange**

La Grange Main Street sponsored a contest for people to take pictures in front of a historic building on the square and post it to their Main Street Facebook page. The picture with the most likes won a \$50 gift card. Numerous businesses took pictures of their employees in front of historic buildings. The contest increased awareness of all of the historic gems in downtown.

### **Levelland**

Levelland Main Street recreated their walking tour adding five new buildings, revamped web pages and new QR codes to direct people to each building’s web page. Each page includes written history, photos and/or video interviews with citizens who have special memories of the featured buildings. A grant from Humanities Texas assisted with the costs of this project.

### **Luling**

Luling Main Street chose Preservation Month to introduce their new facade grant program using this opportunity to promote preservation while educating the public about the types of restorations the program is striving for.

### **Mount Vernon**

A preservation party was held, unveiling the second story of a historic property, with live music and food. Main Street also partnered with the middle school for a Name that Building game of identification of architectural elements of historic buildings.

### **Texarkana**

Main Street Texarkana offered public tours of the insides of never-before-seen historic buildings, trolley rides in historic downtown and living history programs. Railfest was held in the evening with railroad activities, vendors and food.

### **Vernon**

Vernon Main Street held two contests: 1) the Perdue, Brandon Fielder, Collins and Mott Architectural Appreciation Essay Contest, and 2) the Tyson Foods Architectural Appreciation Drawing and Sketching Contest. Participants wrote about or drew buildings within the city of Vernon. Contestants learned about the history and significance of the buildings and the winners were honored and their entries were shared with the public.

### **Victoria**

Victoria Preservation Inc. and the Convention and Visitors Bureau revamped the historic driving tours and distributed them to launch Preservation Month.

### **Waxahachie**

The Waxahachie Heritage Preservation Commission members engaged with 2nd grade students in the Waxahachie Independent School District about historic preservation. They delivered coloring books featuring historic properties to students at two schools and talked to them about the importance of preserving Waxahachie’s heritage and buildings.

## **Calendar of Events**

### ■ **June 4–5, 2013, La Grange**

New manager training prior to the beginning of Summer training for all managers. New manager training will last all day June 4 through noon June 5.

■ **June 5 (10 a.m.)–June 7, 2013 (noon), La Grange**

Summer Main Street training for all Texas Main Street managers

■ **Nov. 5–8, 2013, Bastrop**

Texas Downtown Development and Revitalization Conference (annual conference of the Texas Downtown Association/Texas Main Street Program), see [www.texasdowntown.org](http://www.texasdowntown.org)

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## Websites of Interest

Advisory Council on Historic Preservation: [www.achp.gov](http://www.achp.gov)  
African American Heritage Preservation Foundation: [www.aahpfdn.org](http://www.aahpfdn.org)  
(The) Alliance for Historic Landscape Preservation: [www.ahlp.org](http://www.ahlp.org)  
(The) American Institute of Architects: [www.aia.org](http://www.aia.org)  
American Planning Association: [www.planning.org](http://www.planning.org)  
American Society of Landscape Architects: [www.asla.org](http://www.asla.org)  
(The) Cultural Landscape Foundation: [www.tclf.org](http://www.tclf.org)  
(The) Handbook of Texas Online: [www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online](http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online)  
Keep Texas Beautiful: [www.ktb.org](http://www.ktb.org)  
League of Historic American Theatres: [www.lhat.org](http://www.lhat.org)  
National Main Street Center: [www.preservationnation.org/main-street](http://www.preservationnation.org/main-street)  
National Park Service: [www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov)  
National Trust for Historic Preservation: [www.preservationnation.org](http://www.preservationnation.org)  
Partners for Sacred Places: [www.sacredplaces.org](http://www.sacredplaces.org)  
Preservation Easement Trust: [www.preservationeasement.org](http://www.preservationeasement.org)  
PreservationDirectory.com: [www.preservationdirectory.com](http://www.preservationdirectory.com)  
Preservation Texas: [www.preservationtexas.org](http://www.preservationtexas.org)  
Project for Public Spaces: [www.pps.org](http://www.pps.org)  
Rails-to-Trails Conservancy: [www.railstotrails.org](http://www.railstotrails.org)  
Scenic America: [www.scenic.org](http://www.scenic.org)  
Texas Department of Agriculture: [www.TexasAgriculture.gov](http://www.TexasAgriculture.gov)  
Texas Commission on the Arts: [www.arts.state.tx.us](http://www.arts.state.tx.us)  
Texas Downtown Association: [www.texasdowntown.org](http://www.texasdowntown.org)  
Texas Folklife Resources: [www.texasfolklife.org](http://www.texasfolklife.org)  
Texas Historical Commission: [www.thc.state.tx.us](http://www.thc.state.tx.us)  
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department: [www.tpwd.state.tx.us](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us)  
Texas Rural Leadership Program: [www.trlp.org](http://www.trlp.org)  
Texas State Preservation Board: [www.tspb.state.tx.us](http://www.tspb.state.tx.us)  
Urban Land Institute: [www.uli.org](http://www.uli.org)

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Texas Main Street Program  
Texas Historical Commission  
P. O. Box 12276  
Austin, TX 78711-2276, 512.463.6092, Fax 512.463.5862



**TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION**  
*real places telling real stories*